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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to outline one approach to the study of language teaching by proposing a theory of its minimum elements. This model takes as its focus all of the circumstances in which a learner learns and a professional teacher teaches. The language teaching profession deals with many types of learners, teaching/learning conditions, aims, etc. Yet in another sense the language learning/language teaching process (LL/LT) is concerned with a single individual teacher, and with a particular set of surrounding circumstances. A theoretical study must attempt to provide a comprehensive way of understanding both the complete range of features which at once address and distinguish all learners and teachers and the particular features possessed by any specific learner and teacher. The twelve essential elements of the LL/LT process which are discussed are: policy and aims; administration and organization; relevant professional disciplines; choice of LL/LT types; teacher training; approach; pedagogy, methodology, instruction, and teaching; syllabus design; materials construction; constraints on LL/LT achievement; the learner; and evaluation.
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Peter Strevens

A THEORETICAL MODEL OF THE LANGUAGE LEARNING/TEACHING PROCESS

1. Introduction: Language Teaching and Theory

This paper is a contribution to theoretical studies in language teaching. First we shall give some reasons why such studies are particularly needed at the present time; then we shall outline one possible model.

For two decades, language teachers have had their profession 'put down', either by implication or directly, through invidious comparisons with linguistics and psychology, disciplines which have undergone intense theoretical ferment during the same period; in consequence, language teachers have often been made to feel inferior to linguists and cognitive psychologists.

In recent years, however, a number of scholars have taken up the study of language teaching in general and abstract terms, working towards a general theory of language teaching in its own right, making use of insights from linguistics and psychology when they are relevant yet retaining as their central focus the unique and complex set of events which take place when a learner learns a language through the mediation of a teacher.

Of course, many scholars in the past sixty years or even longer have written about language teaching in terms of principle and theory. Current work must take account of Sweet, Jespersen, Palmer, West and Hornby; of Lado, Marckwardt and Fries; of Mackey, Rivers, Jakobovits, Wardhaugh, Valette and Disick; of Corder, Trim, Roulet, Candlin and Wilkins; of Dykstra and Johnson, of Funke, Richterich and van Ek, of Stern and Spolsky --- and many others. But the reference here is to a new and accelerating effort, namely the attempt to understand the task or process as a whole, and to devise a theoretical model that fits its complexity. Perhaps W.F. Mackey's important Language Teaching Analysis (London 1963) was the work which laid the foundation for current studies by exposing for the first time in a comprehensive way the nature and the complexity of the language learning and teaching process.

It is necessary to refute the imputation that language teaching is an inferior occupation. On the contrary, language teaching is a task in which intelligence, imagination, training, command of language, experience, a body of knowledge and the exercise of judgement and compassion are essential qualities, and in which high standards are imposed and maintained, on a world-wide basis, by a particular branch of the profession of education. Becoming a teacher with high professional standards is different in its content and aims from becoming a good surgeon, or linguist, or lawyer, or psychologist; but it is similar in its reliance upon selective entry, special training, the attainment of skill before acceptance. Just as it is possible, and necessary, to

distinguish between the untrained amateur medical doctor and the professional, so equally it is possible and necessary to distinguish between the untrained amateur language teacher and the professional.

Starting from the assumption, then, that language teaching is one among a number of professions of equal value, the aim of this paper is to outline one approach to the theoretical study of its operation. Specifically, the paper proposes the minimum elements for a theory of the language learning/teaching process. That is to say, it suggests that the learning and teaching of languages can be viewed as a process; that the complexity of the process can be reduced to a minimum number of abstract elements; and that the inter-relationships between these elements can be shown in such a manner that any activity by any learner or teacher, as long as it is relevant to the learning and/or teaching of a language, can be assigned to some element of the theory and can be conceived in relation to the process as a whole.

2. Studies of What?

One feature of this theoretical approach is that it takes as its focus all those circumstances where a learner learns and a professional teacher teaches. It says nothing about learning a language by picking it up from living in a foreign country, nor about the way in which an infant acquires his first command of language. For the purposes of this paper the term acquisition will be taken to mean learning a language without benefit of a teacher and learning will be taken to mean learning with a teacher (and it should be remembered that the adult who works on his own with a self-study course is still, though in an extended way, learning with a teacher).

So we are concerned with what we shall call the language learning/language teaching complex (abbreviated LL/LT): i.e., not just with learning, and not just with teaching, but with both. But this complex is also to be regarded as a process, that is, a series of events in which something is changed, and in which a particular condition at the start of the activity is gradually replaced by a sequence of other conditions tending more and more towards the desired final state. The LL/LT process is not instantaneous: it takes time. It is not accidental, it is deliberate: learner and teacher combine in seeking to reach a particular end-condition.

It is a characteristic of the profession of language teaching that it deals with an indefinitely large range of different learners, different teaching/learning conditions, different aims etc. Yet in another sense LL/LT is concerned with a single individual learner and with his unique personal abilities and qualities, and with an individual teacher, and with a particular, unique set of surrounding circumstances. What the theoretical study must do is to provide a comprehensive way of understanding, at one and the same time, both the complete range of features which at once embrace and distinguish between all learners and teachers, and on the other hand the particular features possessed by any specific learner and teacher.

3. Elements of the LL/LT Process

Seen as a process, LL/LT turns out to have a beginning and an end, and to be prompted and impelled by particular elements.

Table 1 lists the twelve essential elements of the LL/LT process.

TABLE 1: ELEMENTS OF THE LL/LT PROCESS

1. POLICY AND AIMS
2. ADMINISTRATION AND ORGANIZATION
3. RELEVANT PROFESSIONAL DISCIPLINES
4. CHOICE OF LL/LT TYPES
5. TEACHER TRAINING
6. APPROACH
7. PEDAGOGY, METHODOLOGY, INSTRUCTION, TEACHING
8. SYLLABUS DESIGN
9. MATERIALS CONSTRUCTION
10. CONSTRAINTS ON LL/LT ACHIEVEMENT
11. THE LEARNER
12. EVALUATION

The entries in Table 1 are simple labels: we shall discuss each element briefly before returning to the process as a whole, when we shall offer a diagram showing the inter-relationships between the elements of this theoretical model.

4. Outline of the Elements of the LL/LT Process

Element 1: POLICY AND AIMS

This element reflects the public will, the social sanction for the organized provision of language instruction, the response to the linguistic needs of the community. This is the element which takes account of the fact that different communities make very different decisions about language: some make little or no gesture towards the inclusion of foreign language teaching in their educational system; others build it in from the beginning of primary education; some even use a foreign language (e.g., English or French) as the medium of instruction in much or all of the school system. This element is where the sociolinguistic facts of a community - the languages its citizens speak, encounter, need to use, value highly (or value low), feel nostalgic about, regard as social and psychological symbols, etc. - find their general expression, and where this general expression is to some extent refined into opinions about how many of the population should be encouraged to reach what kind and level of proficiency in which languages. In a sense, this element provides much of the essential 'motive power' for the entire process, since in the absence of a public will that some members of the community should learn a particular language, that particular language will not be learned, at least not as a concerted and organized

process. Examples of the workings of this element abound: in the United States, after the launching of the first Russian satellite, the country reacted by deciding that more Americans needed to have a better command of more languages, including Russian; in Britain, social changes led in the 1960's to a public feeling that most young children ought to be given a practical command of French; in Malaysia, the advent of independence was accompanied by a social-political decision to promote and develop Bahasa Malaysia as the principal national language; there are many other examples.

POLICY AND AIMS, then, is a label which refers to the public will that the sociolinguistic circumstances of the community shall be recognized by the provision of teaching facilities for learning languages.

Element 2: ADMINISTRATION AND ORGANIZATION

Once the public will is expressed, it has to be put into practice. This second element consists of the financial and administrative provision for language teaching in the schools and colleges, for training and paying teachers, for building or enlarging schools, for providing books and equipment, for running public examinations (but see element 12, EVALUATION), for organizing an inspectorate, for research and development. Ideally, this element is quickly responsive to major changes in POLICY AND AIMS; in some countries POLICY AND AIMS may even be formed, led and influenced by senior administrators and specialists who operate the machinery of ADMINISTRATION AND ORGANIZATION. Elsewhere, particularly in developing countries with little money and great social problems, this second element may be inadequately financed and poorly organized.

This second element provides the financial and organizational framework and impetus to carry out the social decision of the first element.

Element 3: RELEVANT PROFESSIONAL DISCIPLINES

The administrators who put into operation element number 2, serve a body of teachers in their country who have access to a vast international array of professional knowledge and experience, which in turn has some of its roots in major autonomous disciplines such as education, linguistics, psychology, social theory; and in the recently developed disciplines such as socio-linguistics and psycho-linguistics. The importance of this third element of the model is its acknowledgement that the profession of language teaching, as administratively engendered by element no. 2, can seek assistance from many intellectual sources, each with its own individual justification for existence, yet each with its relevance for, and contribution to, the learning and teaching of languages.

Notice that this formulation contains two central assumptions (a) that the contributing disciplines have their own autonomous justification, which has nothing to do with language learning and teaching, and (b) that each provides a contribution, no more, to the study of language learning and language teaching. Hereby hangs a great and continuing controversy. On the one side of the debate are ranged those who believe that language teaching is necessarily and desirably dominated by linguistics, and that language teaching without reference to linguistic theory - whether in Bloomfieldian structuralist terms or transformational-generative terms or any other - cannot be fully effective; on the other side are those (myself among them) who believe that language learning and language teaching are activities in their own right, which may often be illuminated by some particular insights from different areas of linguistic theory, but which in the last analysis are independent of both linguistics and psychology.

One solution to this apparent conflict of views over the theoretical bases of language teaching is offered by the concept of applied linguistics. This is an inter-disciplinary approach to the solution of all kinds of language-based problems, which increasingly provides a ready-made 'package' combining on the one hand an understanding of the practical, pragmatic difficulties of the teacher and learner, and on the other the relevant insights of theory.

The organization of language teaching in any country takes place not in isolation there but within a well-developed profession whose intellectual and practical bases are firmly established, with an international network of communications and with the collaboration of a world-wide array of centres of excellence. By providing links to this profession and to these centres -- which are generally but not exclusively located in or derived from colleges, universities and research institutes -- this third element is contributing, as do elements 1 and 2, to the 'motive power' which sets the entire process in motion.

Element 4: CHOICE OF LL/LT TYPES

If the three preceding elements can be regarded as cumulatively developing an impetus -- public will + finance and administrative apparatus + disciplinary knowledge and insights -- the fourth element can be regarded as 'shaping' the impetus.

What is meant by 'LL/LT types'? Much of the discussion about language teaching treats the process of learning and the process of teaching as if each was a single, unchanging set of activities. But in practice every teacher knows that both learning and teaching are altered in important ways by different circumstances. It is the nature of these changes and the factors that principally determine them which this fourth element of our theoretical model seeks to describe. Six such factors are isolated, and two or three 'types' of learning/teaching situations are identified within each factor, as in the following summary:-

- (i) PUPIL AGE -- (young child - adolescent - adult)
- (ii) STAGE OF PROFICIENCY -- (beginner - intermediate - advanced)
- (iii) EDUCATIONAL AIMS -- (general educational - practical command - special and vocational purposes)
- (iv) LEARNER INVOLVEMENT -- (volunteer - non-volunteer)
- (v) LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION STATUS -- (mother tongue - target language - other foreign language)
- (vi) TARGET LANGUAGE STATUS -- ('foreign language' - second language)

Discussion of LL/LT Types

PUPIL AGE -- It is the universal experience of language teachers that young children (say, age 6-13) display different characteristics from older learners. They bring to language learning an initial enthusiasm and assumption of success; they tend to learn easily and unselfconsciously; they are inordinately cast down by failure and buoyed up by success; they have a short attention-span; they are quickly fatigued; they are easily bored and almost as easily re-animated; they mimic easily and make unfamiliar sounds with enjoyment and without embarrassment; they are relatively untroubled by making errors in public; they cannot seriously see their learning in terms of eventual usefulness; they are deeply affected by their relations with their teacher; their self-esteem, and in consequence their expectation of personal success, is easily bruised; at their worst they can become sullen non-learners; and so on. Adults display very different characteristics: their enthusiasm is tempered by their reasons for learning; they can make a conscious effort to put up with fatigue and boredom for the sake of an ultimate goal; they imitate sounds less well; they are inhibited from making errors in the presence of their peers; they have 'learned how to learn', and can employ techniques such as guessing and analogy more freely than the young child; they tend to intellectualize their learning; they are often hidebound by the methods according to which they were themselves taught when at school; they are a repository of myths and old wives' tales about foreign languages and the learning of them; they have deep-seated but often erroneous beliefs about their own ability or inability to learn a foreign language; at their best, they learn fast and accurately, but at their worst they can totally fail to make progress. Lying somewhere between these polarities, adolescents are part way between children and adults, but they also have special characteristics of their own: they are liable to sudden and irrational likes or dislikes of the teacher, which carries over into their learning; they may be easily triggered out of learning by the sight of a member of the opposite sex, or by casual mention of one of the current symbols -- revolution, love, ecology, drugs, abortion, pollution, etc. -- after which the resumption of learning may be long delayed. At their best, they can be the fastest learners and the most accurate performers of all, but at their worst they can be bloody-minded class-wreckers. As far as the present argument is concerned, the point being made is that the learner's age determines the type of learning that takes place and the teaching that is appropriate to that kind of learning, and that three main learning/

teaching types need to be distinguished, corresponding broadly to young children, adolescents and adults.

STAGE OF PROFICIENCY REACHED -- A further difference which takes place in the type of learning depends on the stage of proficiency that the learner has reached. At the outset, the learner is totally dependent on the teacher (or on that other embodiment of a teacher, a course-book). He understands only in fragments, guided from smaller fragments to larger by the teacher, until the mysterious moment when for the first time the learner understands or produces a whole utterance or sentence for himself. From this point onwards the learning, and the teacher's role in promoting it, undergoes a change. While the learner was a beginner, the teacher had first to draw him along through a series of prepared learning experiences. This stage of learning is teacher-centred. Now the learner has started to produce and create in the language - not perfectly, and with many set-backs - and the teacher's task is to encourage him to do so increasingly, to steer him away from 'error' and mislearning, to provide him with new rules for constructing sentences, new vocabulary, new skills in communicating, new awareness of acceptability and usage and appropriateness. This stage of learning is a joint teacher-learner campaign, and learners in this stage are usually called 'intermediate'. In a final 'advanced' stage, the learning is largely learner-centred: the teacher's task is to supply the learner with great quantities of reading and listening experience, to monitor his practice in speaking and writing, to plug gaps in his learning, to 'stretch' his capacity for learning, to lead him towards that state in which the learner, as it is often expressed, 'comes to think in the foreign language' -- to depend less and less on the mediation of his mother tongue. None of this is news to the experienced teacher. Its importance at this point is that it constitutes a further distinction between different types of learning, to which the teacher responds by a different type of teaching.

EDUCATIONAL AIMS -- This choice of LL/LT type reflects the main kinds of language teaching courses that are offered. The conventional framework for language teaching, at least up to age 18, has been as part of a general education, in which the language has been an element in a cultural experience on the humanities side. (At one time it was also assumed that the ultimate use to be made of the language would be to study literature in the language concerned, but this aim is becoming rare except for university students of languages.) Teaching a language within a general educational framework inevitably gives to the teaching, a particular 'colouring'; for younger learners it means that the language-learning experience is woven in with mental and emotional development. A second type of framework is the course where the aims are simply to acquire maximum command of the language, unrelated to other kinds of education or subject learning. In these circumstances the 'colouring' of the teaching is subtly different. Yet a third type is found where the language, or even just a restricted sub-set of the language, is learned for special or vocational purposes. The airline pilot or ground controller learning the international

English of the air is a case in point; so is the Polish specialist in public health who learns English for work in India; or the Norwegian secretary who learns to handle office practice in English. This dimension of choice affects above all the teaching, and the learning only indirectly.

LEARNER INVOLVEMENT -- Teachers recognize a distinction between the learning that takes place (and the teaching that can be attempted) when the learner is learning because he has chosen to do so, and that which applies when the learner is learning without this degree of involvement. This factor is frequently assigned to the catch-all label of Motivation, but it seems in fact to merit being included as one of the LL/LT types, since it directly affects the teaching and learning. The teacher can expect of the 'volunteer' learner an attitude towards learning and towards being taught which he cannot expect of the 'non-volunteer'. The volunteer accepts higher expectations for himself, puts up better with fatigue, resists boredom, needs less cajoling and fewer of the interest-arousing techniques of the teacher, and he usually learns at a rate closer to his personal maximum learning-rate than does the non-volunteer.

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION STATUS -- The third choice of LL/LT type is one that is imposed from without, whereas in the two previous cases the change was internal to the learner. The learning task is different, especially in the beginner's and intermediate stages, depending on whether the instruction is couched in the learner's mother tongue, or in the target language itself, or in some other language. The commonest case is no doubt for the medium of instruction to be the learner's own mother tongue, which presents him with a known, sure reference base to which he can and often does refugee his mind if the learning gets tough. But a considerable amount of language instruction takes place in a presentational framework of the target language itself, for example, when English is the medium of instruction as well as the language being learned; or when some subjects on the curriculum, but not all, are taught in the foreign language. Here the learner has no easy refuge for his language-learning attention to flee to, and there is reason to believe that these circumstances (that is, when the language being learned is being used as the medium of instruction) can be manipulated so as to bring about proportionately more effective learning than the Ll situation. A different language framework occurs where an additional foreign language is learned through the medium of one learned previously: for example, when English is taught to Tunisians or Cambodians, not through Arabic or Khmer respectively, but through French. This particular set of choices of LL/LT type affect both the learning and the teaching.

TARGET LANGUAGE STATUS: 'FOREIGN' OR 'SECOND' LANGUAGE -- The last of the LL/LT types we need to consider relates to the distinction between a foreign and a second language. The second language situation exists where the language has special status in the community (usually for historical reasons), as an official language in the courts, as the medium of instruction in some sectors of public education, as a lingua franca, etc. Under these circumstances there is normally a pervasive public awareness of the language (e.g., English or French), though the general

standards of competence in it are not necessarily very high. When the language being learned is a foreign language, no such favourable external circumstances exist, and the language is on a par with all others that are taught. The effect of this distinction upon teaching and learning is very considerable, in the attitudes of the learners and teachers towards their task, in the kinds of teaching techniques that are commonly successful, and in the average levels of achievement that are expected. The FL/SL distinction is a clear-cut example of a difference of language learning/language teaching type such as this fourth element of the model takes account of.

At this point in the description of the theoretical model we begin discussion of a complex set of activities which can be loosely grouped together under the label of 'teaching'. It will be necessary to distinguish between the following sub-divisions of the total set, each of which constitutes a separate element in the model: TEACHER TRAINING; APPROACH; PEDAGOGY, METHODOLOGY, INSTRUCTION, TEACHING; SYLLABUS DESIGN; MATERIALS DESIGN. One of these sub-divisions, TEACHER TRAINING, has functions beyond the obvious ones conveyed by its title: it is also the channel by which, in the long term, the aims of language teaching, its organization, and its links with the worldwide profession, are converted into classroom action of a particular kind. Equally, it is the principal channel through which changes and reforms in language teaching can be brought about. For these reasons we deal with it as the first of the five elements concerned with teaching.

Element 5: TEACHER TRAINING

The general effectiveness of language learning and teaching in any given country is heavily dependent on the nature and quality of the training which teachers undergo before entering their profession. Just as there is a great range of different kinds of learners, different aims, different standards of achievement, so there exists also a great range of different types of teacher training courses. Nevertheless, it is possible to attempt a set of generalisations which embody the essential variables. (We shall describe the basic principles in a way which relates particularly to initial teacher training; but similar aims underlie in-service training and other forms of further training, though action must be adapted to the different circumstances.)

Training a teacher entails the selection of potentially suitable individuals (and by implication, the elimination of unsuitable applicants); the continuing personal education of the trainee so that the teacher can be seen to be a member of the educated sector of the community; general training as a teacher irrespective of specialisation; and special training as a language teacher. The concerted aim of these procedures is to bring each individual trainee as close as possible to the ideal, in which a teacher combines the necessary personal

qualities (of intelligence, a 'non-discouraging' personality, emotional maturity, etc.) with a command of technical skills (in maximising the learning of his pupils, controlling the classroom activity, manipulating the teaching materials), and a humane professional understanding of his career and his educational role.

The training courses which lead towards the creation of the ideal teacher generally contain three different components: a skills component, an information component and a theory component. The skills component embraces the teacher's command of the language he is teaching, teaching techniques and classroom activities, including the 'management of learning', through which the teacher assesses the progress of each individual and adjusts his teaching accordingly. Training for these skills essentially requires great practice, in both simulated and genuine teaching situations, and careful analysis of the trainee's successes and failures. The information component includes information about education, about the syllabus he will be following and the materials he will be using, and about the nature of language. The theory component brings in an appropriate selection of the theoretical findings from educational philosophy, psychology, linguistics, applied linguistics, etc.

However, few teacher-training courses can be ideal. In particular, most courses have far too little time to put on a truly comprehensive training course, being subject to administrative and financial restrictions; many courses have to train applicants who are too young, or who have an inadequate level of personal education; sometimes the training institution lacks sufficient staff of the necessary standard, or lacks facilities, especially for supervised teaching practice. The teacher trainer faces a continual battle to achieve, in the short time at his disposal and given the standards of trainee and staff that he has available, the best possible mix of skills, information and theory.

Thus the teacher-training element of our model demonstrates an inherent characteristic of the whole LL/LT process: the teaching profession holds to an image of the ideal, in which a fully-trained teacher would assist a co-operative learner to achieve, at his maximum learning rate, the closest approximation of native-speaker competence which is possible in the time; yet the ideal is in practice almost always flawed, so that the end-product falls short of the standard that the teacher believes might have been reached. But the ideal buoys up the teacher and encourages him to carry on, despite setbacks, year after year. It is a not negligible function of the teacher-training element of the LL/LT to inject into the whole process an enthusiasm, a sense of pride in achievement, a desire to go on improving the the results attained by one's pupils, a personal energy and drive on the part of the teacher which will last throughout his or her career.

Element 6: APPROACH

By APPROACH is meant a commitment to particular, specified points of view - to an ideology, one might say - about language teaching. Adherence to the set of ideas which characterised the audio-lingual method is one example of an approach; adherence to cognitive-code teaching is another (as long as it rests on well-formulated propositions and is not simply a label saying 'I used to be an audio-lingual person but I gave it up'). Direct Method teaching embodied an approach; so did ~~and~~ and does - grammar-translation teaching.

There is much confusion over terms used in order to designate a 'package deal' of attitudes, theories, methods, techniques; in many cases the word 'Method' (as in 'Audio-lingual Method') conveys just such a composite set of notions, and this is an Approach in the sense used here.

Approaches evolve as a consequence of the need to turn ideas for reform into a comprehensive drive for action. It is not sufficient to believe that levitation (let us say) is an important new factor whose use in appropriate ways would lead to significant improvement in the success of language learning and teaching. That alone would not merit being called an Approach. But if one were to persuade other teachers that one is right (by writing articles and books on the subject), and to produce teaching materials embodying the idea ('English through Levitation: a course for beginners'), and to train teacher in the use of these materials, and to publish the rationale and principles behind one's proposals ('Gravity and language', 'Linguistics and weightlessness', 'Theoretical Studies in Resisting the Pull of Gravity: their relevance to language teaching', etc.) then the whole package might be designated 'The Anti-Gravitational Approach: better language teaching through levitation'.

Many teachers teach and are trained outside the confines of any specific approach; others cut across the boundaries and teach in ways that relate partly to one approach and partly to another. This does not necessarily matter: no one approach has the monopoly of either success or failure.

Nevertheless, a few formulated approaches do exist and many teachers do follow one or another of them, so that it is necessary to make provision for APPROACH as an element in the theory, with the reservation that in addition to Approaches X, Y and Z, provision must be made in this element for the categories 'Don't know', 'Mixed' and 'Undefined'.

Element 7: PEDAGOGY, METHODOLOGY, INSTRUCTION, TEACHING

The reason for including four terms in the label of this element is that different authorities define these terms somewhat differently, and it is necessary to bring in most shades of most of the meanings. This element of the model is concerned with the presentation to the learner of the material he is learning, with different techniques, tips, hints,

gimmicks, systems, instructions, etc. for doing this, for organizing it, and for describing the process. It is the element that takes account of the full range of classroom (and non-classroom) presentations; of teaching games and entertainments; of drills and exercises; of the integration of prior 'softening-up' with initial presentation and subsequent consolidation and repetition; of the 'management of learning' by the teacher as he assesses the moment-to-moment progress of each learner and adjusts his teaching accordingly; of changes of pace; of ways to detect and overcome boredom; indeed, of all the possible deliberate activities that promote learning and defeat non-learning.

In one sense, this is the heart, and certainly the art, of teaching. It is the component which has been the most voluminously written about but the least analysed and systematized. It is the element where the directed intelligence of one human being, the teacher, interacts with and deliberately guides the directed intelligence of another human being, the learner. In another sense, it is the element where practical group psychology is in action, where the single class teacher may be subjected to separate and concerted action by a group of people, in ways that may either promote the learning task ('Please sir, tell us about Paris'); or may be quite irrelevant to it ('Please miss, it's raining'); or may be inimical to it ('We're not interested: we want to play football').

PEDAGOGY etc. includes not only conventional classroom techniques but also any specialized teaching techniques that may be developed for particular use: programmed instruction techniques, for example, language-lab techniques, individualisation procedures, self-teaching methods, small group techniques for use in large classes, community language programmes, peer-group teaching -- any and every means of deliberately achieving the learning of particular language material.

It must be realized that in identifying an element of the process as 'Pedagogy' we are absolutely not implying that existing techniques of teaching and learning must be retained, nor that any particular methodology is better or worse than any other. Quite the reverse: it accords with the multiple, complex nature of language learning that language teaching should itself be diverse; and it accords with the changing nature of learners' aims and needs that language teaching should itself change. The professional task is not only to identify the learners' needs and to select the most appropriate kind of instruction taking all the conditions into account, but also to identify the shortcomings of teaching and to devise ways of overcoming them. This element, then, defines not only the existing range of teaching techniques but also methods still being conceived and others not yet dreamed of. It is open-ended and forward-looking, not closed and conservative.

Element 8: SYLLABUS DESIGN

The syllabus is partly an administrative instrument, partly a day-to-day guide to the teacher, partly a statement of what is to be taught and how, sometimes partly a statement of an approach. It is the document in which is listed, ideally, the items to be taught, in a particular course, to a particular set of defined learners, on a given number of occasions per week or day, in a given sequence, with the aim of achieving stated interim and final goals or objectives, and (usually) according to particular teaching techniques for each and every item. The syllabus embodies that part of the language which is to be taught, broken down into 'items' or otherwise processed for teaching purposes.

The design of syllabuses is a task about which much has been written, especially in two respects: first, in discussion of selection and grading (i.e., the choice of items to be included and the ordering of those items in a particular sequence); and more recently, in considering the underlying bases of what it is that is being selected and graded.

An era of linguistically-based syllabuses (i.e., in which the teaching items were 'language items' from grammar, vocabulary, phonology) has been succeeded by an era of situationally-based syllabuses (i.e., in which topics, themes, situations are selected and graded first), and this may be followed by an era of notional or semantic syllabuses.

The suggestion for notional syllabuses forms part of the important work being produced by the team headed by J.L.M. Trim under the auspices of the Council of Europe. This group is preparing a rationale and a specification for materials to be used in teaching any of the languages of Europe to pre-determined levels of achievement, the learning and teaching stages to have equivalence across languages. (This is the 'unit-credit' system: see van Ek, The Threshold Level, Strasbourg, 1975). Contributing to this work, David Wilkins has proposed (in Notional Syllabuses: a contribution to foreign language curriculum development, Oxford University Press, 1976) a fresh, additional criterion for syllabus design, in the form of a comprehensive set of 'notional' categories for inclusion in syllabuses. These are sub-divided into:

(i) semantico-grammatical categories -- expressing universal concepts of time, quantity, space and matter, as well as expressing grammatical concepts of case ('who did it, who it happened to, and what got changed') and deixis (categories of reference such as pronouns, demonstratives, anaphora, etc.); and (ii) categories of communicative function -- expressing such qualities as modality (certainty, necessity, obligation...), moral evaluation (judgement, approval/disapproval...), suasion, argument, enquiry, emotions, and interpersonal relations. Notions, it will be seen, are a means of hooking the syllabus, as may be required, into the meaning of anything in the universe.

New developments in syllabus-construction are having the effect of (a) contributing to language teaching some insights from linguistics, psycho-linguistics and socio-linguistics, and (b) broadening the profession's view of what should be taught and learned, for instance by acknowledging that communicative abilities form an important portion of the learning and teaching content. (Many teachers, citing Gouin and Comenius, will object that these abilities have been included for decades, if not for centuries, but the importance of the new breadth displayed in syllabus design is that it reverses an existing, fairly recent tendency to narrowness.)

It seems likely that syllabus design will shortly undergo a period of rapid development and systematization. For the moment, in addition to noting that this is an essential element in the total LL/LT process, we shall simply observe that any syllabus must be both realistic in terms of what the teachers and learners can actually achieve who are required to follow it and relevant to the aims and objectives of the public will -- and it is unfortunately the case in some countries, particularly developing countries, that syllabuses have been designed according to modern professional thought and approaches derived from America or Europe, but have then been imposed without regard either to the relevance of these syllabuses to local needs or to the fact that the teachers may not be capable of putting them into practice or that the syllabuses and methods may not match the country's stage of educational development. (In this connection, see C.E. Beeby, The Quality of Education in Developing Countries, Harvard, 1973.)

Element 9: MATERIALS CONSTRUCTION

This element is related both to element 8, SYLLABUS DESIGN and to element 7, PEDAGOGY, METHODOLOGY, INSTRUCTION, TEACHING. There is a case for treating this element separately, since it brings into consideration the great weight and influence of the educational publishing houses and radio and television, in addition to possessing inherent qualities of its own.

It is a practical requirement of the LL/LT process that learners should have available to them an extensive range of different materials. And it follows from the nature of teaching that the teacher should be able to choose this material from among an even greater range. The only practical way in which this can be brought about is by the existence of a massive industry of materials publishing, which in most countries relies on commercial firms. This is a difficult problem in countries whose educational budget is very small, and some such countries exercise various forms of restrictions upon the availability of published materials from abroad. It is probably true, however, that there is a positive relation in any given country between effectiveness of teaching and the quantity of materials available to choose among. The bigger the choice, the more effective the teaching.

However that may be, all teaching materials need to possess certain characteristics -- and these apply equally whether we are considering printed course-books, ancillary readers, visuals of many kinds, recordings, films, or any other kind of instructional materials. They need to be:

- (i) realistic i.e., capable of being used by the teachers and learners; capable of being learned from; cheap enough to be available; actually in hand, not empty entries in an official list which never reach the learners;
- (ii) relevant to the particular point in the learner's progress; to his aims and age-group;
- (iii) interesting i.e., varied; on topics of interest to the learner; intellectually satisfying;
- (iv) encouraging i.e., having the quality of making the learner feel he is making progress, or at least enjoying his learning;
- (v) compatible with the approach being followed; with the teacher's attitudes.

We should point out that between them these last five elements embrace the teacher, as well as the teacher's professional activity. In the next element we shall see that the teacher whose professional skill falls below certain minimum standards becomes an impediment to the learner's progress. But that, we must assume, is the exception rather than the rule -- or at least it is a condition which can be identified and presumably remedied by a further course of teacher training. Consequently we assume that 'the teacher' pervades the whole set of elements concerned with teaching: TEACHER TRAINING, APPROACH, PEDAGOGY, etc., SYLLABUS DESIGN, MATERIALS CONSTRUCTION. He or she does so either as an individual in personal contact with the learner (typically but not necessarily with a class of learners), or else at one remove from personal contact, as the designer of teaching materials, techniques, courses, etc.

All the five preceding elements can be regarded as jointly constituting the way in which the motive power of the public will, implemented through finance and organisation, informed by the relevant professional disciplines, and channelled into the appropriate LL/LT type, is transformed into a prolonged and closely-directed effort of teaching and learning. Next we look at factors which may promote or reduce the effectiveness of this teaching/learning effort.

Element 10: CONSTRAINTS ON LL/LT ACHIEVEMENT

Suppose that in a given country all the elements so far considered were to have a high value: a particular language (let us say, English, for the sake of an example) is felt by the public to be of such value that all secondary school pupils should learn it (element 1); in the national education system, money is allocated for training teachers of English, paying their salaries, etc. (element 2); modern ideas on teaching English are available to the profession, for example through university and

college staff (element 3); the appropriate LL/LT types are identified (element 4); teacher training courses are provided which conform to international standards (element 5); a suitable approach is encouraged (element 6); good standards of teaching skill are available (element 7); realistic and relevant syllabuses are designed (element 8); and a wide range of suitable materials is available in schools and colleges (element 9). There remain a number of factors which may either act as constraints upon the effectiveness of the teaching/learning effort, or be capable of manipulation so as to increase that effectiveness. These constraints on achievement are the following:

- (i) total quantity of instruction
- (ii) intensity of instruction
- (iii) various impediments to learning and teaching
- (iv) quality of the teacher

Each of these merits a brief explanation.

(i) Total quantity of instruction. Since it is clear that language learning is not instantaneous, it must require time: there must be a minimum time for learning at a given rate to bring about a given level of attainment. Obviously, enough teaching/learning time must be provided for any particular criterion to be reached. Less obviously, it seems also to be the case that not too much time should be devoted to reaching a given criterion. A useful concept here (although unfortunately it seems to be as yet an abstract notion, incapable of being realised in quantifiable observable terms) is what J.C. Catford has called the mathon (abbreviated ma) or 'unit of learning'. (Although Professor Catford has used this concept in his teaching over many years, I do not believe it has figured in his published work.) Suppose that to reach a given criterion of language learning requires 1000 ma; it might be determined that for a particular LL/LT type (see element 3) 1000 ma can be optimally taught and learned in 100 class hours. (Secondary observations might suggest that e.g., 5% of learners achieve the same criterion in the full 100 hours. Measurements of this kind are not in fact possible, but they would be extremely valuable.) So as a result of observation and experience, our 1000 ma are organised in 100 class hours, let us say at 3 hours per week for 33 weeks of a school year. But now suppose that in a particular school it is felt that this gives the learner too heavy a load, and instead the same criterion entailing 1000 ma is spread over two years, or 200 hours. There are indications that this decision might be followed by a drop in performance by the end of the course, on the grounds that 1000 ma are a quantity too small for 200 hours to support and therefore boredom will creep in, with the anti-learning consequences that all teachers recognise.

Many educators believe that this is already the case in the language teaching of many countries, and that better results on the present syllabus could be obtained by reducing the number of hours of instruction. Certainly it seems to be a common observation of school language courses that extension beyond about 3 or 4 years of overall duration is not usually

accompanied by proportionate increases in terminal achievement.

This is an area where little is known with certainty but where a body of professional belief is growing which can be expressed thus: 'Every year of school language teaching beyond three years tends to progressively reduce the learner's eventual achievement, not to improve it.' No doubt this proposition, jestingly referred to as Streven's Law, is an exaggeration and over-simplification. Nevertheless many people believe that a time/achievement relationship exists which ceases to be linear after a certain point and may change from positive (i.e., improvement) to negative (i.e., decline).

(ii) Intensity of instruction. A given total quantity of instruction can be concentrated into a short overall duration, or spread thinly over a long period. Do we know what effect differences of intensity bring about in the learning that takes place? There is little hard experimental evidence, but the growing consensus of those teachers who have experience of both higher- and lower-intensity teaching is that, within broad limits, as intensity goes up the learning-effectiveness of each hour of teaching goes up more than proportionately. In other words, at 25 hours per week, a 100-hour course engenders more learning than does the same course given at 5 hours per week. One can go further: it is possible that there is a lower limit below which the rate of learning per hour of teaching falls off disastrously. I would put this limit at about 4-5 hours per week. Below this rate of intensity it seems that the effectiveness of learning is much less, per hour, than above it. Perhaps there are too many opportunities for forgetting; or the learning does not reach a necessary minimum impetus or drive. Whatever the reason, 'thin' courses are notoriously ineffective. At the upper end of the intensity scale, more than approximately 18-20 hours per week requires special precautions to be taken against fatigue on the part of both learner and teacher. Higher rates of intensity are entirely possible and are often reported to be extremely effective, but they place special responsibilities on the teacher for ensuring that the quality of the teaching does not deteriorate, and in particular that the learner's stamina and continuing attention are closely watched and carefully nurtured. The important point for our present discussion is that intensity, like quantity, has a potential effect in raising or reducing the effectiveness of the learning/teaching process.

(iii) Various impediments to teaching. A number of physical and psychological factors can interfere quite drastically with learning and teaching. Some of these are obvious: overcrowding, for example. A class size of 100 is a prescription for very low average class rates of achievement; while a class size of 1 is a prescription for probable high rates of achievement. Noise is another factor of this kind. Heavy traffic noise is more pervasively damaging to the teaching of language, which for much of the time is carried by sound, than to some other subjects. In some parts of the world the sound of rain drumming on corrugated iron roofs is so overpowering that language learning stops, in

practice if not in principle, for the duration of the monsoon season. Distraction is another factor. So is fatigue: for example, the class which is regularly timetabled for late on Friday afternoon can be largely written-off as a learning event. One of the most difficult impediments is examination-neurosis. Some learners (at all ages) become so anxious about their anticipated performance in exams that their learning is affected. This anxiety may originate either with the learner himself, or with his family, or even, unfortunately, with the teacher. All these impediments, and others which could be added to the list, diminish the learning that takes place. Conversely, removing them may have great effect in improving the achievement of the learners.

(iv) The quality of the teacher. In an earlier part of the discussion (on element 5) we considered TEACHER TRAINING and noticed that there exists a fairly general agreement about what constitutes an 'ideal' teacher. Here, in element 10, CONSTRAINTS, we encounter reality: how closely does the actual teacher in a given situation approach the ideal? It is one thing to train a man or woman to a high standard of professional ability: it is another to ensure that he or she maintains that standard, let alone that they improve on it, in the years that follow. Teaching can be, for some people, a difficult and trying profession, ill-paid, poorly-regarded in the community, frustrating, worrying. The teacher who views his job in this light is quite likely to deteriorate over the years in the standards he brings to the service of his pupils. A poor teacher is an impediment to the learning process --- but what constitutes a poor teacher? There are perhaps three minimum requirements of a teacher which can be formulated, without which the teacher must be regarded as reducing the learner's chances of achieving his maximum rate of learning: (a) the teacher must display a 'non-discouraging' personality. The test of this is pragmatic: if his pupils are in fact discouraged by him, the point is clear. (b) He must have an adequate command of the language he is teaching. Again the test is pragmatic: if he lacks command of the language in the form he needs for classroom use, if he suffers from hesitations and uncertainties in his control of the language that are recognised as such by his learners, if he makes errors or is inconsistent in his control of grammar, meaning or usage, then his grasp of the language is inadequate for his job and it becomes an impediment to the learning of his pupils. (c) He must display at least minimum skill as a teacher. Again, the question is answered by the teacher's actual performance. Do his pupils learn? If so, are they learning because of the teacher, irrespective of the teacher, or in spite of the teacher? In the last case the teacher is an impediment to the learning process. When it is this fourth impediment (i.e., poor quality of teacher) which is identified as occurring, one immediate remedy lies in renewed teacher training, and indeed one function of element 2 ADMINISTRATION AND ORGANIZATION, and element 5 TEACHER TRAINING is to provide prophylaxis against the occurrence of this impediment by making in-service re-training courses for teachers a normal expectation of the teacher's career.

It will be clear to the reader that this model of the language learning/teaching process regards both the teacher and the learner as contributing to the process, and as potentially either improving or diminishing its effectiveness according to the precise circumstances in each case. In the context of element 10, CONSTRAINTS ON LL/LT ACHIEVEMENT, the intention is to emphasize the fact that a teacher of inadequate quality may indeed diminish the learner's progress. But equally, a teacher of exceptionally good quality may improve the learner's progress and compensate for deficiencies elsewhere in the total system

More generally, a given average level of competence among the whole population of teachers has consequences for the standards of teaching materials that are required. The very best teachers rely rather little upon materials prepared by other people, often making their own improvements or replacements and using the prescribed textbooks only as a general guide. The poorest teachers, on the other hand, rely totally on the teaching materials and are only as effective as the textbooks permit them to be. It is not unknown for textbooks to be written partly to help the teacher to improve the learner's progress, but also partly to serve as a form of in-service teacher-training.

Interdependence exists between all the elements of our theoretical model, but nowhere is it more critical than between the quality of the teacher (part of element 10) and the nature of the teaching materials used (element 9).

Element 11: THE LEARNER

This is the point where the entire LL/LT process concentrates and has its effect. When a teacher teaches, it is with the aim and expectation that a learner learns. The learner is thus the focus and the end-point of all the elements 1 to 10 that have been considered in this paper. But the learner is a human being, and not surprisingly he displays in this respect as in every other a number of differences between himself and other human beings. There is a tendency, in the wake of modern psycholinguistic studies of the way a small child learns his mother tongue, to act as if all language-learning human beings were just a set of identical, walking, talking language-acquisition devices. Of course they all possess the wonderful human creativity that allows them to learn a language at all, but they also possess idiosyncracies and distinctions that mark off one from another, as every teacher soon discovers. Leaving aside the range of psychological factors which a mental and emotional analysis would require, we need to distinguish (i) a common potentiality for language learning, and (ii) personal variables.

It seems to be inescapable that every normal human being has the potentiality to learn a foreign language (at least to achieve practical command of the spoken form). Whether the internal mechanism by which he does this is exactly the same as the mechanism by which he acquired his mother tongue is unimportant for the present discussion: what matters is that

the potentiality exists. People can persuade themselves or be persuaded by others that they are incapable of learning a foreign language, but that does not alter the facts as they appear to be, namely that foreign language learning potentiality exists in all human beings, at all ages.

The debate between those who argue that the infant's inherent 'language-acquisition device' (LAD) remains with him unchanged throughout his life, and those who argue that the LAD atrophies during late childhood and therefore some other mental mechanism has to be used or developed in order to learn a foreign language, has always seemed to me an unrealistic dialectic. It is intuitively likely that the human individual's capacity for learning a language would alter in the course of his maturation in roughly the same ways that his other abilities alter. In that case, one would expect the child's LAD to partly endure and partly change: the language-learning mechanism of the older child would thus be partly like that of the infant and partly different - and this is what teachers observe. The polarity changeless versus atrophying seems an inadequate basis for discussion.

At the same time, and however much the teacher may wish to persuade himself that the learner learns only because the teacher teaches, we must also accept that people learn languages at least partly by themselves. If they are learning by 'picking the language up', then the unguided operation of the LAD is the sole source: most people under these conditions can acquire some degree of competence in the foreign language, but for the majority of them the procedure is slow in operation and patchy in quality. If they are learning from a teacher there are moments when they shut the teacher out (from lethargy, or boredom, or frustration, or even because they recognize a moment when the spontaneous operation of their own LAD may offer a quicker route to a specific piece of understanding) and give rein to their internal language acquisition mechanism. If the learner is using a 'self-study' method, he is confronted with an interesting mixture of techniques, in which his LAD is being manipulated, so to say, by a teacher who is disguised as the learner himself reading -- vocally or silently -- from a book.

The learner's potentiality for language learning, then, may be driven either solely by such experience of the language as the learner may encounter (e.g., as when picking up a language during a stay abroad) or solely as the result of the professionally-directed efforts of a teacher, or more often by a varying mixture of the two.

As to the personal variables which different people display, they seem to be of four kinds: (i) attention, or willingness or commitment, or whatever term can be found to refer to the differences of application to the language learning task. It is reflected in the effort and time an individual devotes to the task, to the mental assiduity with which he approaches it, and also to the distinction between 'volunteer' and 'non-volunteer' which we noted in element 4, CHOICE OF LL/LT TYPES. (ii) Special

language ability. It does seem to be the case that there are inherent individual differences in language learning ability, although they are probably less than we used to believe, and they apparently relate to overall intelligence, to eye-ear preferences, to qualities of memory, and to other psychological measures. (iii) Previous experience. It is commonly agreed that learning one's fifth foreign language is 'easier' (whatever that means) than the fourth, and so on; sometimes the experience of learning a foreign language may be associated with unpleasantness, in which case psychological impediments to further language learning may be aroused, but in general it would seem that experience facilitates future learning of languages. (iv) Manageability of learning. It seems that every learner has a personal maximum rate of learning which may not be the same as that of the next person; he can learn at any learning rate from 0 to 100 percent of his personal maximum; and his actual learning rate at a given time will be open to encouragement or reduction in complex ways that are personal to him. In particular, he will react in his own way to the ministrations of a teacher. Some learners are easily encouraged by almost any teacher; a few are much more 'choosy' and will attain their personal maximum language learning rate only with some teachers, or after much cajoling; a very few react constantly against all attempts at teaching them; and some change from one of these states to another at different stages in their learning careers.

And so our consideration of THE LEARNER as the focus of the immensely complex activity which is the LL/LT process must assume that all learners have the potentiality to learn a language, but that there will certainly exist variations as between one learner and another and from time to time in the learning career of any individual. It is an essential part of the teacher's task to be aware of this and to have the professional knowledge and skill to enable him to help the individual learner at any given point of time, to maximise his rate of learning.

Element 12: EVALUATION

We have categorized language learning/teaching as a process in which something (i.e., the learner's command of the language) is being changed. Like most complex processes, LL/LT needs and possesses feedback systems which assess the progress of the change and supply information to those who are controlling the process (the teacher, or the learner himself if he is engaged in self-study learning) about how the learning is coming along, so that changes in the teaching can be made for the purpose of improving the learning. However, tests and examinations (and especially examinations, which unlike tests do not normally consist of objective measuring instruments) have come to fulfill a function different from that of a normal, regulatory feedback system. Instead of simply providing information about the learner's progress for the purpose of adjusting the teaching and so improving the learning, examinations are frequently used for purposes of social administration, selection for or against

further education, certification of mere time served as a learner, provision of a ticket of admission to a range of jobs -- in short, categorizing the individual against innumerable future events. This change of function can have damaging consequences for the success of language learning and teaching.

In the British tradition, at least, examinations have been allowed in many cases to dominate and distort the teaching, to the extent that teaching has often been centred on the syllabus for the exam rather than the syllabus for the teaching course. Perhaps surprisingly, these two syllabuses have rarely been the same. In many countries, especially in former British territories, the effective criterion for success in an English-language course has been to achieve the pass mark in an examination set and marked in Britain, often with little or no account taken of the particular language syllabus followed in the schools overseas; sometimes the examination has been initially devised for British, native English-speaking candidates, and exported for use by foreign learners. Whatever the reasons for this (and they were often the highest educational motives) the result has been that many courses became 'exam-cramming', and the idea of a balanced language-learning syllabus was lost sight of. Fortunately, the current trend is towards the establishment of regional and local examination boards, and the reform of examination syllabuses in the hope of bringing about an improvement in the teaching. From the point of view of our theoretical study, we need to realize that evaluation takes many forms, some of them directly serving the teacher's needs for feedback information, some of them serving social and administrative needs, and some of them having unwanted and injurious effects upon teaching and learning.

We have now completed a survey, in simple outline, of the twelve principal elements that form the basis of this theoretical model. Of course, other models are conceivable, and models may be constructed from other standpoints. But the model described here is offered in the hope that it will encourage teachers and others to engage in theoretical studies of their profession. The elements and their inter-relationships are summarised in Table 2.

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TABLE 2

